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Caroline Luszawski

Western University, cluszaws@uwo.ca

Kaitlyn Fox

Western University, kfox47@uwo.ca

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Community Funding City Art Center



Kaitlyn Fox

Caroline Luszawski

Psychology 3317E – Community Psychology

Dr. Leora Swartzman

University of Western Ontario

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Executive Summary

Mental health has long been recognized as a fundamental aspect of everyone's health and is integral to our overall well-being. According to Mental Health Commission of Canada, one in five Canadians will be affected by mental illness in their lifetimes and poor mental health is becoming of one of the leading causes of disability in Canada.

With limited funding available from federal as well as provincial government agencies, the mental health care system is failing to take a holistic approach in addressing the challenges faced by persons in recovery. This is evident in the numbers of individuals reporting poor mental health status and in the increasing percentage of patients being readmitted into hospitals following discharge. In an effort to address 'revolving door syndrome', local mental health and community-based organizations have turned to peer support programs, such as the City Art Centre (CAC). These groups have been shown to produce beneficial outcomes for both their members and peer leaders.

Similar to other peer support programs, CAC provides a safe, respectful environment where peer support, fellowship and encouragement facilitate recovery. In addition, it offers a unique opportunity for expression through various forms of art.

One of the cornerstones of CAC is the leadership role of volunteer coordinator offered to its members. In this role, members assume leadership responsibilities for the group as well as the facilities. It is an important step in the recovery process which allows coordinators to regain confidence in their abilities. It also acts as a stepping-stone to further opportunities (education

and/or vocational). As a token of appreciation for their efforts, coordinators are offered a small per diem compensation.

Like many non-profit organizations, the CAC operates on a very small annual budget. For CAC to continue to acknowledge its peer coordinators for their vital contributions, additional funding is required to cover their per diems, an expense larger than all others combined. This document contains all of the relevant information for the completion of the year-long project to secure additional funding from multiple organizations in support of CAC's volunteer coordinator program.

The main objective of the project was to successfully complete four funding applications. Students utilized participant observation as a 'research tool' alongside information obtained from CAC's archives. In addition, students worked very closely with the volunteer coordinators themselves to gather and document information on the impact that the per diem program has had on their recovery process. The information gathered from volunteer coordinator was critical for the successful completion of the grant applications.

As part of the project, a funding sources chart has been developed including the deadlines, requirements and eligibility criteria of several funding agencies in the surrounding London area. From this list of funding sources and under discretion of the supervisor of CAC, students chose four agencies and successfully completed the respective applications.

The completion of this project has major implications for CAC. If granted the requested funds, students will have helped the studio secure \$20,800 (enough funds to run the per diem program for four years). CAC has been notified that the London Community Foundation application is under review and are waiting to hear back from the remaining three granting

agencies. In addition to the potential financial benefit of the project, the information compiled during the application process can be very valuable to CAC for future grant applications.

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Statement of the Problem

City Art Centre (CAC) is a non-profit organization that offers its assistance to adults with mental health challenges. It was founded by a group of individuals in recovery with a main goal of providing a safe, respectful space for expression through various forms of art where peer support, fellowship and encouragement facilitate recovery, foster self-responsibility and improve quality of life.

The stigma and negative stereotypes attached to mental illness can make it difficult for persons facing mental health challenges to build and maintain relationships. CAC promotes recovery from mental illness by encouraging members to express through art what they cannot express in words. The center allows its members to connect with others who may be experiencing similar hardships. For many, the center is a space where they can find belonging and community.

In addition to focusing on the recovery process through artistic expression, CAC also provides members the opportunity to develop leadership skills through its 'volunteer coordinator' program. Members of CAC can request to become a volunteer coordinator and are screened by the chairperson before taking on the role. Once accepted, volunteer coordinators take on the responsibility for the security of the center, a number of administrative tasks and the overall maintenance of the facility. Finally, volunteer coordinators represent the CAC both on and off site, interacting with prospective members at the center and representing the CAC during public events. As a token of appreciation for their efforts, coordinators are offered a small per diem compensation.

As a volunteer-run, non-profit organization, CAC is funded through grants, donations and fundraising events and operates on a very small budget. After initial meetings with the community

partner, the need for additional funding was highlighted as one of the major problems CAC is faced with.

The current budget cannot cover the center's highest annual expense of \$5,200, the volunteer coordinator per diem. In order for the center to continue to offer the program, several grant applications need to be prepared and submitted annually.

Literature Review

London is a city in Southwestern Ontario with a population just shy of 400,000 individuals. In a census by Statistics Canada for the 2013-2014 year, an average of 7.3% of the London population reported fair or poor mental health. The rate of individuals with mental illness readmitted to a hospital within 30 days of discharge was 11.1% in the year 2013 (Canadian Institute for Health, 2017). The number of individuals being readmitted to hospitals demonstrates the need for a better mental health care system. Psychiatric outpatients have been found to be at risk for depression, hopelessness and low self-esteem. Low self-esteem, particularly inferences about how other people value you, predicts the development or maintenance of suicide ideation, beyond the effects of depressed mood or hopelessness (Bhar, Ghahramanlou, Brown & Beck, 2008). Patients should be receiving care that better supports them in their full recovery process – even after they are discharged from the hospital.

The mental health care system only treats symptoms and fails to adequately improve the quality of life for persons in recovery. Campbell (2010) states:

“..one aspect is the failure to respond to crisis holistically and, in particular, to help people come to terms with the content of the troubling thoughts and perceptions that often accompany extreme

illness. To ignore these areas is to deny the full meaning and significance of the experience and leave individuals in an unsatisfactory limbo.”

Campbell (2010) discusses how the mental health care system does not improve the overall quality of a patient’s life but acts as a quick fix for individuals experiencing mental health challenges. The main goal of health care providers is to help the individual to return to a functioning state so that they can be discharged. They do this instead of taking a holistic problem-solving approach. Thus, many patients return to their initial state of crisis and are readmitted to the psychiatric ward soon after they are discharged. This cycle is known as 'revolving door syndrome'.

Along with prescribed medication and treatment plans, patients may find additional ways to improve the state of their mental health. One way is through art. Art as a creative expression tool has been shown to increase self-esteem, self-worth and self-efficacy in individuals with mental health challenges (Caddy, Crawford, & Page, 2011). Art creation can assist in relieving psychological symptoms, making it an ideal activity for those struggling with mental health challenges. This relatively inexpensive and user-friendly form of expression is very accessible to the population and allows users to work at their own pace. If they so choose, they are provided with the opportunity to display their work in a public space.

Lamb (2009) suggests that providing individuals living with mental health challenges a venue in which to express their artistic talents allows them to demonstrate their self-efficacy through art making. This vulnerable population is often stigmatized and with this stigma may come the idea that they are incompetent and unproductive. However, through the creation and potential displaying of artwork in a public space, these individuals are able to regain a sense of mastery and competence.

Aside from allowing members to use art as a medium for expression, CAC also provides persons in recovery with a safe space. Safe spaces are important as they have been shown to be effective places for individuals struggling with mental health challenges to cultivate relationships with those of similar experiences. Bryant, Tibbs and Clark (2011) found that users of a mental health service day center valued the safe space as a place where they could be themselves and interact with others. The day center acted as a place which sheltered users from the everyday prejudice faced by their group.

The many benefits individuals obtain from settings such as CAC derives from peer support. These benefits include: increased self-esteem, personal development and maintenance of social ties as well as personal empowerment. Lewis, Hopper and Healion (2012) report that individuals participating in peer support groups are able to draw on the experience of others. Peer support groups assist members in overcoming feelings of alienation. Participation in peer support groups was also found to have a positive effect on increased awareness of potential triggers and more active engagement in treatment and medication plans (Jones, Corrigan, Drexler, Parker & Larson, 2013).

There have also been notable differences in the attitudes towards more traditional mental health services between individuals in peer support groups versus those that are not. Hodges (2006) found that on average, individuals facing mental health challenges who were regularly accessing a peer support group were more aware of the availability of the following services compared to those that were not part of a peer support group: homelessness outreach services, vocational services, group homes, education and most importantly mental health education. These individuals used the following services significantly more: psychotherapy, dual diagnosis

group, education and mental health education. Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that peer support group members may have better knowledge of the services made available to them and in making better use of these services, they are able to take on a more active role in their recovery process.

The literature indicates that not only do members benefit from peer support groups; group leaders benefit as well. Shutt and Rogers (2009) discuss the positive effects that peer leaders experience when helping others. The researchers found that peer leaders not only reported more engagement in the peer support program but also demonstrated a deeper understanding of their problems more than members in non-leadership positions. It is shown that working in peer support can benefit overall wellness. Walker and Bryant (2013) found that “peer support workers reported increased confidence, increased self-esteem, and increased social networks through fellowship with other peer support workers.” Peer support workers can use this opportunity to improve their own personal development as well as to assist members with their respective recovery processes.

Peer support work can be seen as a stepping-stone to employment, as it prepares members of support groups for paid work. The literature shows that the role of a peer support worker in a community setting “enabled people with a psychiatric disability to find a place in the community beyond being a “patient”” (Walker & Bryant, 2013). In seeing themselves as potential contributors to society rather than patients, peer support workers are given the opportunity to maximize their potential. Leadership positions allow members to step into more responsible roles in their groups and act as a gateway to further social positions such as employment or continuation of education.

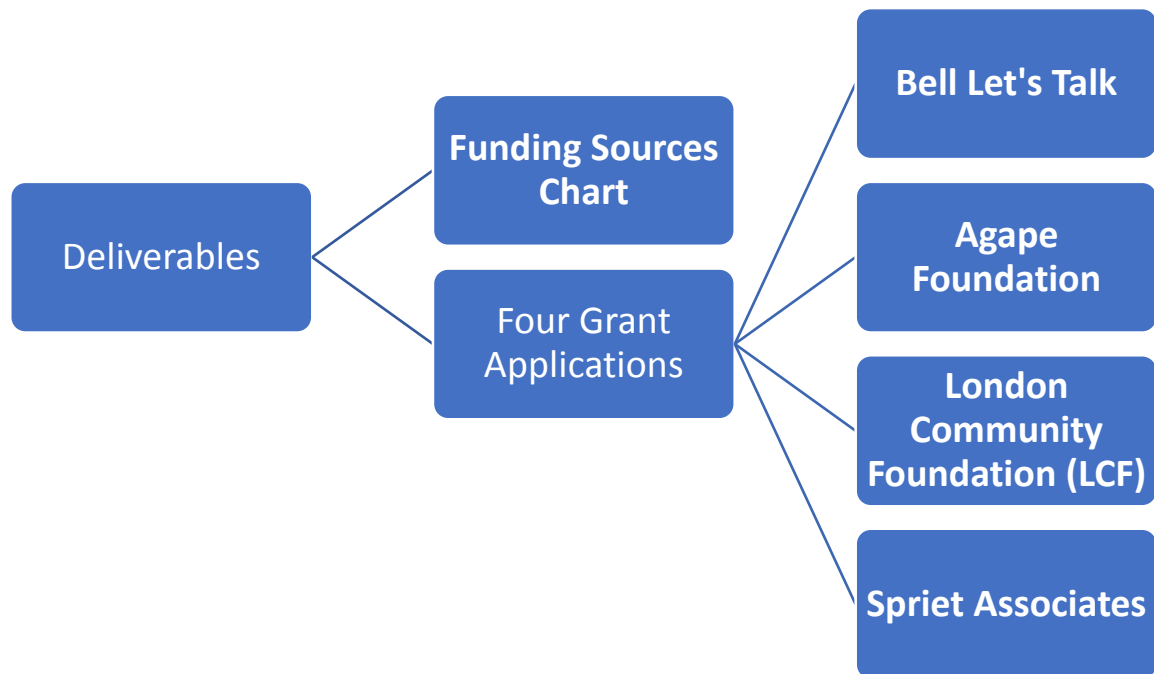
Peer leaders were found to help members in ways other than just running the support group. Austin, Ramakrishnan and Hopper (2014) identified three areas in which peer support leaders are able to offer support to their non-leader peers; transforming experience into expertise, understanding mechanics of peer support and launching peers towards their own recovery. Having experience in recovery from mental health challenges allow for peer support leaders to gain respect from the individuals they are helping. Peer support leaders also have had previous experience with the mental health care system and therefore are able to empathize with members going through similar experiences. They can use this experience to help them create positive relationships with other persons in recovery. Sharing their stories gives persons in recovery someone to relate to.

One of the best ways to see the person behind the illness is through the use of narratives. Campbell (2010) explains that the use of personal experience opens up a wider, more sensitive understanding of what issues an individual might be experiencing. Narratives are especially useful in psychology because they help us to understand personal experience at a much deeper level. Additionally, narratives can be utilized for clinical purposes. Kim (2016) says that narrative psychology emphasizes the importance of narrative in psychology, and has an “influence on the way that psychologists listen to their patients, the way patients tell their stories and how psychoanalytic research is conducted”. We have experienced the importance of narratives firsthand through our experience in writing and submitting the grant proposals. The stories shared by members at the center have helped us to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of peer support groups and the value of a place such as CAC.

City Art Centre utilizes the demonstrated benefits of art as expression, safe space, peer support and narratives in the creation of an area that helps facilitate the ongoing recovery of individuals suffering with mental health challenges. Volunteer-run programs such as CAC have been shown to yield benefits on the lives of its members and coordinators, which is why it is imperative that we obtain funding for the continuation of the 'per diem' program.

Aim of the Project & Intended Deliverables

The main objective of the project was to assist CAC in securing additional funding by preparing and submitting grant applications. In close co-operation with the project supervisor, five project deliverables were identified:



Project Personnel

There was one project supervisor for the funding project, **Kathleen Carmichael**, who chairs the board of City Art Centre. Kathleen assisted students with each component of the project and was a vital resource for the successful completion of the grant applications. In the initial stages of the project, Kathleen helped students to gain a better understanding of the mental health care system from a user perspective and her knowledge of community funding was a valuable resource for students to draw upon. She reviewed and helped edit each of the draft applications before they were submitted to the granting agencies.

Student Team Members and Their Respective Roles

The student team consisted of:

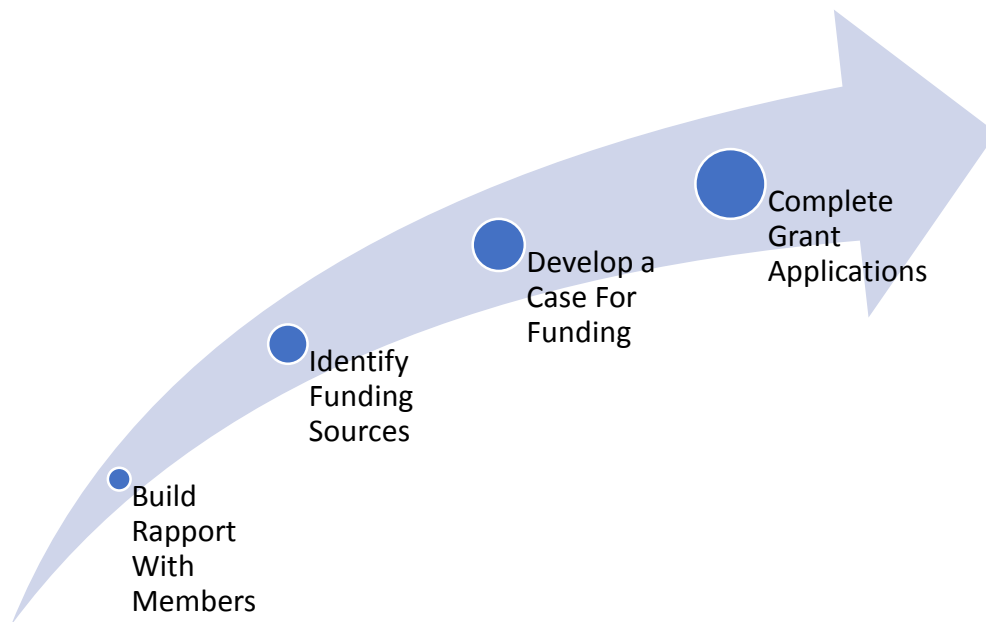
- **Caroline Luszawski**, a third year Honours Biology and Psychology major at Western University
- **Kaitlyn Fox**, a third year Honours Disabilities Studies and Psychology major at Kings University College at Western University.

Both students worked on all aspects of the project together and completed the grant applications as a team. Students spent weekly afternoons at the studio, getting to know members and learning what they value about CAC. Students also met with their supervisor Kathleen regularly to monitor progress and to ask questions pertaining to the grant applications.

Description of Project

Project Tasks

Students were tasked with completing four applications. To frame the task of obtaining funds for CAC, students have broken down the work into the following key project milestones:



1. Build Rapport with Members

In order to complete the grant applications, students first built rapport with members and interacted closely with volunteer coordinators during weekly visits to the center. Students had to gain the trust and respect of members who initially felt their presence as threatening due to students association with the university. Interacting with members allowed students to gain a deeper understanding of the community found at CAC.

2. Identify Funding Sources

Students developed a document containing potential funding sources for the project. This document included the application criteria, deadlines and contact information of each granting agency. Students, along with their supervisor, used this document to determine which funding sources they would apply to.

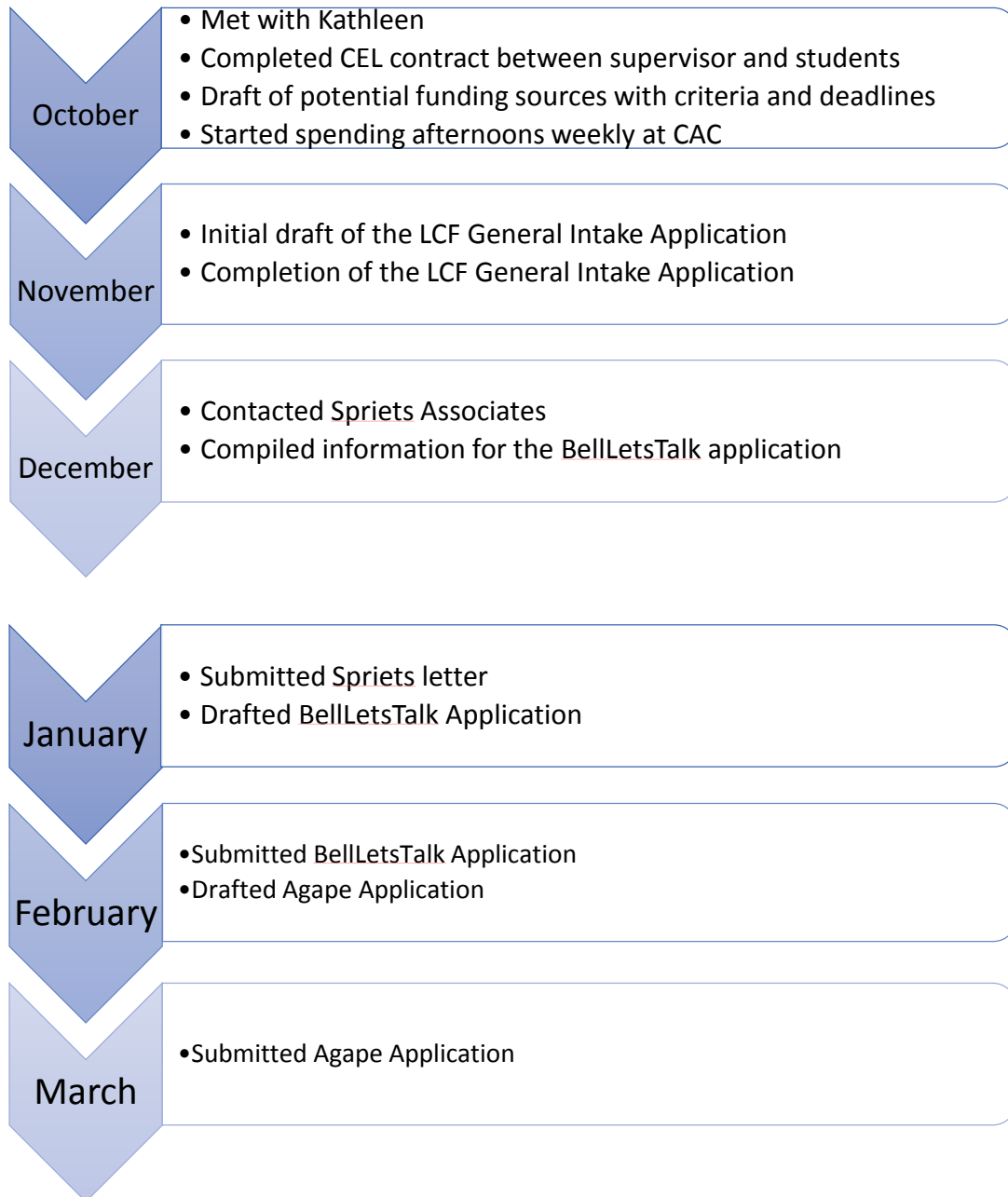
3. Develop a Case for Funding

Students utilized the personal testimonies of members as a resource for the completion of the grant applications. The narratives obtained from members and volunteer coordinators were vital for the successful completion of the project. Students did not have the opportunity to use any scale or survey-based measures to determine the effectiveness of the per diem program. Instead, they relied on the personal testimonies of members to form a strong case for funding.

4. Complete Grant Applications

Students attended weekly meetings with their supervisor, Kathleen Carmichael, which gave them the opportunity to discuss project progress. It was during these meetings that students received feedback on their draft grant applications and asked any necessary questions for clarification. Once students received Kathleen's approval, they submitted the applications on behalf of CAC.

Timeline



Challenges Faced

Challenge of the 'Western Bubble'

Something that became apparent very quickly was the “Western bubble” that we are confined to as students. Most university students spend most of their time on campus or in the downtown area and do not have the opportunity to interact with the London community at large. One of students’ requirements in working with the CAC was visiting the center weekly to interact and build rapport with members. In doing this, students were exposed to the direct effects of the mental health care system on the lives of users and witnessed some of the struggles that people in recovery are faced with. After spending time at the center, students became aware of the many services and resources that the mental health care system and the community provide to people in recovery. These resources and services have the potential to make a positive impact however, many people do not make use of them. This may be due to the lack of efforts in promoting these resources to individuals in crises. Spending time at the center has been an eye-opening experience for the students as they have been able to learn how individuals in the community deal with mental health challenges.

Initial Disconnect with Community Partner

There was an initial disconnect with our community partners and it took a number of meetings to clarify the direction of our project. Our community partners had a hard time accepting research as a part of our course, possibly because many of the members had previously been part of psychiatric studies. They may have seen the students as a threat and became hesitant and distrustful. Students had difficulties understanding how they could complete a

research project without conducting any research. This led to a discrepancy in the direction of the project between the students and the placement supervisor.

After further clarification, the project team came to the conclusion that the grant applications would aim to highlight the personal experience of members at the CAC. Students learned that this information could be obtained from the lived experience of the members rather than through a literature review. Students benefited greatly by spending more time interacting and building relationships with members of the center. The information obtained from volunteer coordinators about their roles was critical in the completion of all grant applications.

Meeting the Unique Requirements of Each Granting Agency

The granting agencies asked questions that required applicants to relate their program to the agency's values and purpose. Students collected 'data' from their supervisor and tailored this information to make it relevant to the questions being asked by the granting agencies, who were looking for specific answers. Students had to summarize the information they collected to support the per diem program in a word limit set by the grant in agencies. This was a difficult task for students, as they wanted to include as much detail as possible to highlight the success of the program. With assistance from their supervisor, students learned how to carefully revise their answers to make sure they were sufficiently demonstrating the need for funding. This task helped students to develop better summarization skills and to learn to answer questions directly, a skill that can be transferred to a more academic setting and is not just limited to writing grant applications.

Financial Costs

This project was completed as part of a Western University Community Engaged Learning (CEL) course, and thus has no direct financial costs to CAC. The 'data' we collected to complete the grant applications was attained from participant observation. Additionally, we completed the grant applications using documents CAC made available to us.

Findings

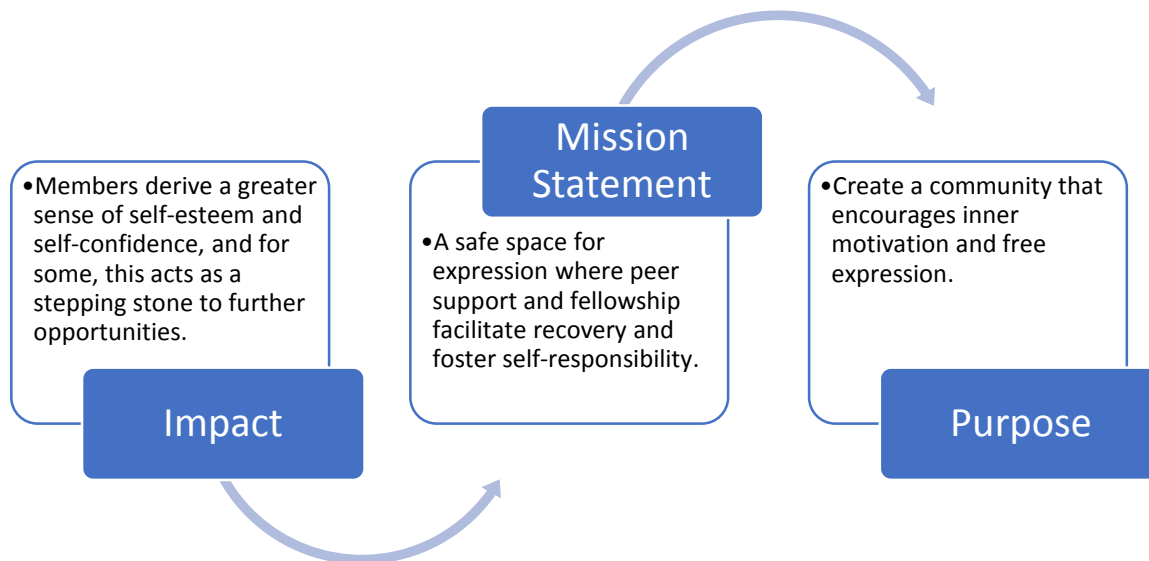
In completing the grant applications, students learned that there are several key differences between academic and community-based grants. Students expected to include a thorough literature review as evidence for the success of CAC's volunteer coordinator program. However, students quickly learned this was not necessary for the completion of the community grants, where information was obtained directly from the volunteer coordinators and members themselves.

When researching potential funding sources, students found that the granting agencies were looking to support organizations and programs that better the London community in various ways. Students found a wide variety of granting agencies, some of which supported various different causes including education, environment, housing and transportation issues.

Students selected four granting agencies that were looking to support organizations that promote health and wellness, arts and culture and social inclusion in The London community. Students applied to the following granting agencies and were able to identify several commonalities and unique requirements of each grant application.

Common to all Grants:

Students identified several commonalities of all four grant applications. All of the granting agencies were looking to get a better understanding of the mission statement, impact and purpose of CAC and its volunteer coordinator program. Students also indicated the amount requested for the continuation of the program on each grant application, which was \$5,200.



Unique Aspects of Each Grant Application:

Bell Let's Talk

Founded in 2010, Bell Let's Talk is an initiative run by Bell that aims to increase Canada's awareness to mental health by supporting projects that improve access to mental health care, supports and services for people in Canada. By 2020, Bell expects to have donated \$100 million to mental health programs.

Students found that this application was more ‘data-based’ than the other applications.

One of the questions asked for the specific outcomes and indicators that determine the success of the program.

What are the predicted outcomes for this project? What measurable indicator(s) will determine that you have been successful in achieving these outcomes?

Outcome

Indicator

This was a difficult question to answer because CAC has no ‘measurable’ indicators of the program’s success. CAC does not utilize a measure that quantifies changes in self-esteem and self-confidence of volunteer coordinators prior to and after taking on the role. This was a set-back for students, as they needed to reassess the information obtained and decide a way to best highlight the program’s efficacy. Students met with their supervisor and discussed how narratives and other anecdotal data could be used as evidence of the program’s success.

Additionally, students realized that Bell was the only granting agency that asked specifically for estimated project revenues. This question was not applicable to CAC because they are a non-profit. However, students noted this as a unique requirement for the grant application. Bell may have asked this due to the fact that they are such a large granting agency and they do not only fund non-profits.

Please provide the expenses and revenues for this funding project/initiative.

Estimated project expenses Cost

Total project expenses _____

Estimated project revenues Amount

Total project revenues _____

[London Community Foundation \(LCF\)](#)

The London Community Foundation (LCF), founded in 1954, is a granting agency that aims to build a stronger London Community by supporting non-profit organizations that target London's pressing issues. Just last year, LCF donated close to \$5,000,000 to over 200 community organizations.

Students completed the General Intake Form so that the agency could have their file on hand and check if they were qualified for the granting programs as new funding supports are made available.

Unique to the LCF application is a question determining if the organization is part of London's "Vital Sign Issue Areas", which are used to highlight the issues the community organization addresses.

Which Vital Sign Issue Area(s) does your request address?

- ✓ Health & Wellness
- ✓ Arts & Culture

London's Vital Signs issue areas are indicators significant to well-being and quality of life that are broad and represent the diverse needs of the community. The Vital Signs reports focus on different issues yearly. However, LCF's granting is not limited to specific areas. The volunteer coordinator project addressed the areas of 'health and wellness' and 'arts and culture'. Some other issue areas that LCF funds include economy, environment, belonging and leadership, food, gap between rich and poor, getting started, housing, learning, safety, transportation/getting, work, and youth.

[Agape Foundation](#)

The Agape Foundation assists in developing the London community through grants, special rewards to non-profits, charitable groups concerned with education, the arts, recreation, social services, health and the environment. Agape was founded in 1969 and are generous donors to the London community. They have donated \$1,500,000 to community organizations since 1989.

Unique to this application was a question asking applicants to relate their project to the purpose and vision of Agape.

How does this project relate to the purpose and vision of Agape?

In essence, then as we (The Board of Directors) look for the "Agape" in each application, we are looking for the manifestation of God's love for each and every creature. Seek to find the "Agape" in an application, we are looking for an unconditional, non-exclusive act that will improve the well-being of people within the Greater London area.

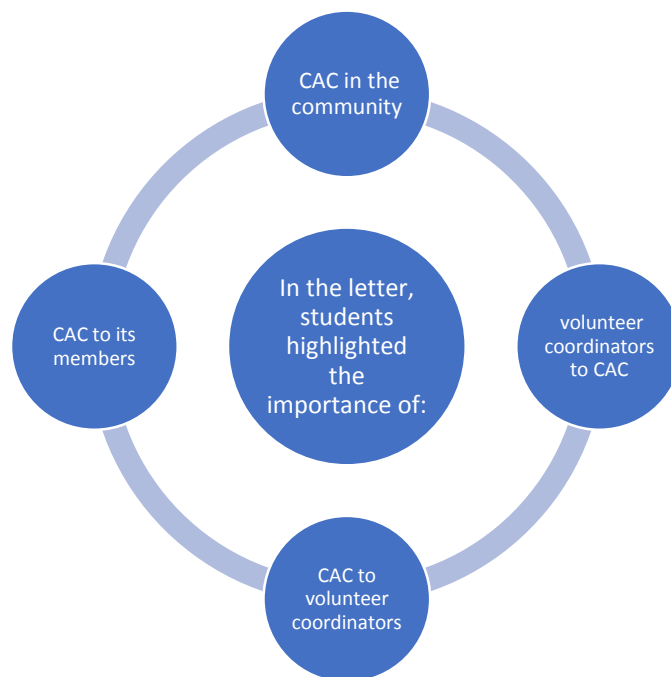
Students believed that CAC's purpose and vision are in line with Agape's mandate. By definition, 'agape' means unconditional love – a term that students thought described the atmosphere at CAC perfectly. The community formed at CAC is open and welcoming and is a place where members are encouraged to regain autonomy. The studio is a low-pressure, schedule

free, non-intimidating zone where members have the opportunity to create new, meaningful relationships with others.

[Spriet Associates](#)

Spriet Associates is a firm that provides professional engineering and architectural services to municipal and provincial governments, as well as the industrial and commercial sectors. Spriet Associates is well known for making generous donations to the London community. Therefore, students and their supervisor decided that they were an appropriate agency to reach out to.

This application differed from the other three because it was in the form of a letter, so there were no specific questions that needed to be answered. Students wrote a letter to support the continuation of the volunteer coordinator per diem using the information they had accumulated to complete previous grant applications.



Implications of Findings for the Setting

Once the applications were drafted, Kathleen (the students' supervisor) reviewed and made suggested changes for students to make before submission. Students submitted the grant applications once Kathleen approved the final drafts. If the grant applications are successful, the students will have assisted CAC in securing funds for the volunteer coordinator per diem for several years. The information gathered for the completion of the grant applications can be used by the CAC to recruit more volunteer coordinators and members in the future.

In the event that the students are not successful in securing the funds for the continuation of the per diem program, the information collected can be used as a basis for further grant applications. Next year's students can build the case for the continuation of the CAC, which will prove to be important in applying for funds to secure housing.

Lessons Learned

The Mental Health Care System from a User Perspective

In conversations with members of CAC, students learned that many of them were not receiving the supports they needed from the mental health care system. Members shared personal experiences, making it evident that there is a fault in the system: health care providers are not meeting the direct needs of the patients. If a patient has a preference for a certain method of care, often times their requests are dismissed and health care providers may instead do what is most convenient for them. Rather than treating mental illness holistically, the system focuses on treating symptoms – leaving patients discouraged and preventing them from seeking further help.

The testimonies of members made students aware of the perceived power imbalance between health care providers and patients. Patients feel as though they are ‘another number in the system’ and as if their mental health concerns are invalid. They feel as if their recovery is not a priority of these health care providers, who seem as if they are only interested in decreasing the number of patients in the emergency room.

Richness and Validity of Personal Testimonies

Initially, students planned to support the continuation of the per diem by conducting a thorough literature review, which would be used as evidence of the program’s success. However, students learned very quickly that the information needed to complete the grant applications could be best attained from volunteer coordinators and members themselves. Using the personal testimonies of members as a ‘research tool’, students were able to build a strong case for the continuation of the per diem. Granting agencies were asking for a detailed explanation of the impact of the program, which is best understood from the lived experience of members. In building rapport with members, students were able to better understand the positive impact of a community like CAC in a person’s recovery journey.

The Benefits of Peer Support Systems

Due to the stigma surrounding mental illness, individuals facing mental health challenges may find it difficult to find a supportive and welcoming community. It is for this reason that many of the members have decided to join CAC. Members appreciate the opportunity to form social connections and be a part of a low-pressure, self-directed environment that fosters free expression. The hierarchy that is typically encountered in more traditional mental health care systems is absent in the community found at CAC. The peer support model utilized gives members

the opportunity to reach out to and receive support from persons facing similar hardships. Seeing the success of the volunteer coordinators allows members to discover their capabilities and expand their self-schema, which is an important step in recovery.

Recommendations for Future Class Projects

London City Council has recently announced it intends to sell T-block, the historic building in which CAC is located, and for which CAC pays minimal rent. Considerably more funds will be needed to secure CAC a permanent home. Students have identified CAC's relocation project as a potential task for future students. To successfully complete this project, students will first need to accomplish several smaller tasks:

1. Contact City Council

Next year's students will need to contact City Council and obtain information regarding CAC's relocation. Once they know what the Council's plans are in terms of selling and helping CAC find a new home, they will be able to move forward in their project and begin to look for potential permanent spaces for the studio.

2. Expand the Search for Funding Sources

This year's students applied to community grants in hopes of securing funds for the continuation of the volunteer coordinator per diem program at CAC. Future students will need to expand their search for funding sources to include donors who are able to provide adequate capital funds needed to secure a permanent home for the studio. Students may conduct a search for organizations in the London community that are more generous with their granting amounts.

3. Apply to Ontario Trillium Benefit

This year's students have identified Ontario Trillium Benefit (OTB) as a potential funding source for the capital funds needed to secure a permanent home. OTB is a generous donor, granting up to \$500,000 to community organizations. However, this larger scale granting agency requires some additional evidence in support of CAC. Alongside the strong testimonials of members, OTB requires more empirical evidence. CAC may need to implement measurable outcomes and indicators to support the program's success, such as Day and Sin's Leadership Effectiveness Scale and Reichard's Leadership Emergence Scale. These scales can be used to measure leadership development in the volunteer coordinators.

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